PREFACE

TO THE SECOND VOLUME.

As frequent use is made in these pages of observations drawn from the auxiliary sciences, as affording some light on the medicinal properties of plants, it may be proper to examine how far testimony of this kind is entitled to receive credit in our inquiries and examinations.

There can be no question, that the actual operation of medicines upon the human system, gathered from positive experience, is, in the present state of our knowledge, the only criterion by which we can pronounce, with universal certainty, on their properties. There are nevertheless many things to be learnt from chemical analysis, sensible qualities, and botanical affinity, which may afford us, in some instances certainty, and in most others presumptive evidence of the medicinal characters of vegetables. The correspondence in these respects is frequently so striking, that we can hardly resist the belief, that an entire harmony of properties exists, which, if we are unable